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The role of national identity dynamics in shaping attitudes and responses to the migrant crisis of 2015

A comparative case study of Italy and Germany

Bachelor's thesis

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Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

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Bachelor's thesis in European studies with English
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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of civic and ethnic identity in shaping attitudes and responses to the migrant crisis in Italy and Germany. Against the backdrop of identity theory, the study investigates the similarities and differences in identity constructions among the general population in both countries and explores how these identity constructions influence individuals' perceptions and reactions to the migrant crisis. This will be a comparative case study design, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the nuances of identity constructions in Italy and Germany. The study's dependent variable is attitudes and responses to the migrant crisis, with independent variables including civic and ethnic identity among the general population in Italy and Germany, relationship to the EU, and trust in the EU. Drawing on data from the European Social Survey (ESS) and Eurobarometer surveys, the research aims to provide insights into the complex interplay between identity dynamics and thereby attitudes and responses toward migration in Italy and Germany. Findings include that while national identities are fixed and change slowly over time, in light of the crisis attitudes towards immigrants can change, and this will be conditioned by the type of national identity. Italy has an ethnic exclusive identity, while Germany has a civic inclusive one, but Italy also has more of a civic identity in addition to the ethnic one, than anticipated in the first place.

Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven undersøker rollen til borgerlig og etnisk identitet i å forme holdninger og reaksjoner til migrantkrisen i Italia og Tyskland. På bakgrunn av identitetsteori undersøker studien likhetene og forskjellene i identitetskonstruksjoner blant befolkningen generelt i begge land og utforsker hvordan disse identitetskonstruksjonene påvirker individers oppfatninger og reaksjoner på migrantkrisen. Dette vil være et komparativt casestudium, som åpner for en dyptgående utforskning av nyansene til identitetskonstruksjoner i Italia og Tyskland. Studiens avhengige variabel er holdninger og reaksjoner på migrantkrisen, med uavhengige variabler inkludert borgerlig og etnisk identitet blant befolkningen generelt i Italia og Tyskland, forhold til EU og tillit til EU. Med utgangspunkt i data fra European Social Survey (ESS) og Eurobarometer-undersøkelser, tar forskningen sikte på å gi innsikt i det komplekse samspillet mellom identitetsdynamikk og dermed holdninger og reaksjoner mot migrasjon i Italia og Tyskland. Funn inkluderer at mens nasjonale identiteter ligger fast og endrer seg sakte over tid, kan holdninger til innvandrere i lys av krisen endres, og dette vil være betinget av typen nasjonal identitet. Italia har en etnisk eksklusiv identitet, mens Tyskland har en borgerlig inkluderende, men Italia har også mer en borgerlig identitet i tillegg til den etniske, enn forventet i utgangspunktet.

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Magdalena Agata Krol

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List of Abbreviations

EU	European Union
ESS	The European Social Survey
ESS6	European Social Survey Round 6
ESS9	European Social Survey Round 9
R6	Round 6
R9	Round 9
WWII	World War II

1 Introduction:

During the summer of 2015, a substantial number of migrants traveled through Italy on their journey to Northern and Central Europe. This surge in migration movement was precipitated by widespread unrest and civil conflict in the Middle East and North Africa (Rye, 2022, p.120). Consequently, the European Union (EU) faced significant challenges in managing its borders and accommodating the influx of migrants and refugees. The crisis manifested differently across EU member states, eliciting a range of responses. Furthermore, the EU encountered difficulties in maintaining a unified migration policy, leading to some countries feeling left out or having a big burden on their shoulders with no one to step in and help. Italy was one of the frontline countries that desperately needed help (Metcalfe-Hough, 2015, p.4). Germany, on the other hand, volunteered to take on a large portion of the migrants, despite not being a frontline country.

Since the Napoleonic War, which heralded the inception of a unified Italy, discussions surrounding identity have been central to public discourse, shaping societal attitudes and responses to the external pressures (Dixon et al., 2018, p.26). Against this backdrop, the sudden influx of migrants in 2015 not only tested Italy's capacity to provide and aid but also brought to the forefront questions of collective solidarity and national identity. During the 20th century, Italians' perception of identity and their perspective on the world were profoundly influenced by notable external occurrences, such as the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the emergence of fascism, and the formation of the EU to mention a few (Dixon et al., 2018, p.26). In the 21st century, Italian identity undergoes further evolution, shaped by prolonged economic challenges and inward migration from the Mediterranean region. As Italy grappled with the influx of migrants and the strain it placed on its resources, questions about who belongs to the national community and who is perceived as an outsider became increasingly salient. This prompts inquiries into the nature of Italian identity, the extent to which it is inclusive or exclusive, and how it shapes attitudes towards migrants. Germany on the other hand, became the eye of the storm with Chancellor Angela Merkel and her "Wir schaffen das" – "We can manage it" declaration. In 2015 alone, around 1.1 million migrants arrived in Germany, receiving warm welcomes from the enthusiastic Germans and their "Willkommenskultur" – welcome culture (Mitra, 2022, p.164). With a strong civic identity rooted in principles of openness and inclusivity, the response to the migrant crisis reflects broader societal values. This leads us to the question about the resilience of civic identity in the face of external pressures, as well as implications for social cohesion and integration.

The thesis explores the question of *How can the national identities in the case of Italy and Germany differ, and how can these identity constructions affect the attitudes and responses to the migrant crisis?*. First, I define collective identity from broad to more specific, in the context of civic and ethnic identity. Second, I examine the migrant crisis, before moving to the comparative analysis of Italy and Germany and therefore also civic identity in both of these countries. Italy was a country that appeared unable to control the external EU borders by themselves and had a lot of strain put on them because this country was responsible for managing the asylum claims and migrants, before moving onward to Germany, which managed the migrant crisis differently. Mentioning the Dublin Regulation here will also be relevant, as not all countries of the EU wanted to implement

this agreement, putting even more strains on for example Italy. The regulation is important because it directly impacts how nations like Germany and Italy navigate their responses to the migrant crisis. It underscores the complex interplay between identity – civic and ethnic, and responses to the migrant crisis, highlighting the potential intersections with national identity narratives. The data used will be presented from The European Social Survey (ESS), and from the Eurobarometer.

2 Literature review

2.1 Collective identity

Discussing collective identity theories is relevant, because it helps understand the complexities of the migrant crisis and its impact on societies by providing insights to different identity theories. According to Thomas Risse (2015: 20), identities in general, are formed through processes by which individuals and social collectives navigate their sense of self and aspirations. There comes a point where you go from "I" to "We", which becomes the shift to social identities, also called collective identities. Henri Tajfel defines social identity as "that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Risse, 2015, p.22). Furthermore, social identities extend beyond individualistic notions of "I" or "Me", encompassing the aspect of oneself that is intertwined with a broader "we", encompassing a social group or community (Risse, 2015, p.22). This signifies that social identity is not solely owned by an individual but is rather shared within a larger collective. To elaborate, social identities are not only shared among individuals but are collectively shared. The mutual awareness of membership within a social group holds significance in shaping social identities (Risse, 2015, p.22).

Within collective identities, there exists a differentiation between "self" and "other", as well as "in-group" and "out-group", which are recognized as fundamental aspects of identity theory (Risse, 2010, p.26). The out-group is perceived as the "others" while the in-group represents the "self", implying the presence of a distinct boundary surrounding out-groups based on our perception of them. As we can see, identity encompasses various facets. Tajfel says this can also include ethnicity, religion, and nationality. Therefore, individuals tend to favor the group they belong to, which would be their in-group (Risse, 2010, p.26). Risse builds on this, informing that they favor it over the ones that they feel they do not belong with, which would be the out-group. Consequently, this leads to an in-group bias and constant social comparisons. Risse (2010: 27), points out that when groups perceive more significant differences between themselves, and others compared to differences within their own group, their collective identity strengthens. Across the continent, the majority of individuals possess a European identity, but it supplements their national identity (Risse 2010, p.61). This will be interesting to interpret as we discuss collective identity further, in the case studies of Italy and Germany. This is because real human social behavior is rooted in a complicated mix of loyalties, commitments, emotions, goals, solidarities, and purposes (Geels, 2020, p.3). This allegiance for loyalty serves as a foundation for rallying society and uniting for joint endeavors.

When uniting for joint endeavors, we can assume that the people have some kind of collective feeling. When referring to this collective feeling, we can refer to national identity, which is yet another form of a collective identity. Nathalie Hofstetter mentions that previous research typically aligns with either a normative or an affective perspective on national identity (Hofstetter, 2022, p.3). Hofstetter continues explaining using various scholars, that the affective approach focuses on emotional attachment to the nation,

often manifesting as nationalism or patriotism, while the normative approach concerns the criteria defining national membership and delineating boundaries between outsiders and insiders (Hofstetter, 2022, p.3). The outsiders and insiders are another word for in-groups and out-groups, or "us" and "them" as we know from Risse. This becomes a key for the analytical aspect in cross-national studies when it comes to national identity. This is because it enables researchers to identify patterns and variations in national identity constructions across different contexts, shedding light on the complexities and nuances of identity formation. By comparing how national identity manifests in diverse socio-political landscapes, researchers can discern underlying factors and trends influencing identity narratives. Friedrich Meinecke and Hans Kohn differentiated between a "Statsnation" and a "Kulturnation", and these scholars commonly distinguished between ethnic and civic conceptions of nationhood as ideal types of national identity (Hofstetter, 2022, p.3).

2.2 Civic versus Ethnic Identity

Risse is one of the scholars that mentions civic identity – as a third identity construction. Unlike national or ethnic identities, civic identity still delineates between "us" and "them" but without attaching negative judgments to the out-group, therefore not viewing any differences as inferior (Risse, 2015, p.28). Certain national identities within the community of democracies exhibit civic characteristics, as exemplified by Germany (Risse, 2015, p.28). Furthermore, scholars tend to distinguish and widely discuss two types of what they look at as the ideal nationalisms, which are the civic and the ethnic ones. Civic forms of national identity emphasize citizenship as an attainable legal status open to all individuals who consent to abide by a specific political, social, and legal framework (Fligstein et al., 2012, pp.111-112). In contrast, ethnic expressions of nationalism require individuals to conform to the national culture by virtue of their birth into it, because it underscores the significance of shared language, cultural traditions, ancestral ties, and affiliation with a dominant racial or ethnic group as criteria for national belonging (Fligstein et al., 2012, p.112). In other words, the civic nationalism or identity presents the opportunity for individuals who are not indigenous to a specific region, to embrace its national identity by actively assimilating into its societal fabric. Broadly speaking then, a civic identity tends to exhibit greater inclusivity compared to an ethnic identity. An ethnic identity often necessitates birthright affiliation, which makes migrant assimilation into the host country's identity typically deemed arduous. Hofstetter draws on findings that indicate an inverse association between openness to experience (and low extraversion) and an ethnic interpretation of nationhood, while conscientiousness demonstrates a positive correlation with a civic understanding of nationhood (Hofstetter, 2022, p.2). Consequently, ethnic and civic identities are often characterized as exclusive and inclusive.

Transitioning from the broader discussion of civic and ethnic identities, we now focus on the distinctive facets of Italian and German national identities. Starting with Germany, the country has a history tainted by World War II (WWII) and Nazism, which makes the Germans reluctant to express nationalism. The reunification of Germany in 1990 compelled German historians to reassess their field, as the impact of the reunification is significant on German historiography (Berger, 1995, p.187). The risk of reverting to a narrow focus on "national identity" and "national history", which was prevalent in German historiography for nearly two centuries, is what makes the country reluctant to express nationalism (Berger, 1995, p.187). Germany used to be "pure" ethnic nationalistic, but this later got discredited by Nazism (Mouritsen, 2013, p.90). The

concept of distinguishing between civic and ethnic nationalism in Germany at this time was something Kohn wrote about. In his work at the close of WWII he delineated civic nationalism as a rational and liberal ideology based on principles of human rights and individual freedoms, contrasting it with ethnic nationalism, which was characterized by ethnocentric and religious tendencies rooted in tribal affiliations (Tamir, 2019, p.425). Today, it is evident that the East-ethnic/West-civic divide of Kohn is crumbling. Germany, once emblematic of the ethnic pole according to Kohn, has shifted towards the civic pole since WWII, embracing itself as a constitutional democracy (Tamir, 2019, p.429). Thus, civic identity has been the norm in Germany following WWII. When looking at scholarly sources on Italian identities, the opposite happened. Firstly, "Linguistic nationalism" is something of significance in postwar Italy (Ballinger, 2007, p.740). This concept, equating language with national identity or ethnicity, subtly incorporates notions of race (Ballinger, 2007, p.740). The IP Law of 1912 solidified Italian citizenship primarily through *jus sanguinis* which meant inheritance by blood (Ballinger, 2007, p.725). This is important because citizenship by blood plays a significant role in shaping ethnic identity by emphasizing ancestral connections and group cohesion within a particular ethnic community. Thus, Italy's identity has traditionally been rooted in ethnic elements such as language and cultural heritage – making it ethnic. Their sense of cultural continuity dates back to the Roman Empire period, contributing to a perception of Italy as a culturally rich and diverse nation. In comparison to Germany, Italy leans towards an ethnic identity first.

Another collective type of identity is the European identity. European identity, while distinct from national identity, can also have overlaps, and is generally hard to define. According to Risse, individuals harbor multiple identities that they invoke based on contextual circumstances. It is widely accepted that individuals possess multiple identities, and they typically do not perceive these identities as conflicting, but instead learn to navigate between their identities and employ them in context-specific manners (Risse, 2010, p.23). According to Benedict Anderson, Europe and the nation are both considered "imagined communities", and individuals can perceive themselves as belonging to both communities without necessitating a primary identification (Risse, 2010, p.40). An increase in one identity will therefore not mean a decrease in another. Looking at the empirical findings on the Europeanization of identities in mass public opinions, Risse has summarized it well. Firstly, a significant portion of Europeans identify with Europe and their nation-state (Risse, 2010, p.61). The primary division in public opinion was found to be between exclusive nationalists, who solely identify with their nation-state, and inclusive nationalists, who consider Europe as a secondary identity (Risse, 2010, p.61). As we can see, the exclusive and inclusive identities are used for more than just the civic and ethnic identities. Secondly, the European identity showed a strong correlation with cosmopolitan and other liberal values (Risse, 2010, p.61). This is important, because a strong European identity can be crucial for legitimizing EU policies and instilling a sense of solidarity and belonging among the citizens. Lastly, a nationalist European identity seems to be emerging, grounded in a cultural perspective of Europe as a Western civilization with shared historical heritage, Christianity as a core religion, robust national traditions, and well-defined geographical borders (Risse, 2010, p.61). This last European identity is one of the reasons for why defining European identity remains challenging, as it faces challenges due to the continent of Europe's linguistic, historical, and cultural diversity. Given varied interpretations and complexities in reconciling robust ethnic national identities with a broader European identity, it underscores the interaction between civic and ethnic identity. Additionally, it is important

to note that amidst discussions on European identity, there are active forces seeing to mold it towards a more "ethnic" orientation. Some advocate for emphasizing commonalities based on shared language, historical heritage, and ethnicity, rather than promoting a more inclusive "civic" identity centered on shared citizenship, norms and values (Risse, 2015, p.11).

During times of crisis, one can expect political attitudes in both Germany and Italy to undergo noteworthy shifts. According to Risse (2015: 33), sudden shifts in identity are indeed possible, just as much as change can happen incrementally and slowly over time, especially when significant crises appear. For instance, WWII precipitated an almost total overhaul of German national identity, culminating in its extensive Europeanization (Risse, 2015, p.33). Given what we now know about the predominantly civic identity of Germany, which tends to be more inclusive and therefore more open to outsiders, we may anticipate a relatively more positive attitude towards out-groups, characterized by solidarity, cooperation, and empathy (Risse, 2015, pp.26-27). In contrast, Italy tends to have a stronger emphasis on ethnic identity, which may result in a more cautious approach towards out-groups, because there is a heightened focus on preserving national and cultural boundaries. Regarding trust, we should expect to then see variations between the two countries. In Italy, ethnic identity may foster a sense of social cohesion and solidarity within the in-group, where consequently, trust in national institutions often depends on their capacity to safeguard national interests and uphold cultural values (Dixon et al., 2018, p.144). Conversely, in Germany, where civic identity cultivates a sense of collective trust and responsibility in institutions, there may be a greater level of confidence in national institutions to effectively manage crises in general.

3 The Migrant Crisis of 2015

The migrant crisis of 2015 originated primarily from the Arab Spring, gaining prominence as over a million people from the Middle East and Africa embarked on perilous journeys across the Atlantic Ocean in search of better prospects and increased freedoms in Europe (Rye, 2022, p.120). The influx of migrants escalated over subsequent years, reaching its peak in 2015. The scale of inward migration witnessed in 2015-16 was unprecedented in contemporary Europe's history (Buonanno, 2017, pp.101-102). In 2015 alone, there were 1.8 million irregular border crossings into the EU, marking a staggering 546% increase compared to the previous year (Buonanno, 2017, p.102). This prompted widespread recognition of the situation as a migrant crisis due to the lack of coordinated control among different EU member states over the unfolding events (Van der Brug & Harteveld, 2021, p.228). Certain EU member states bore a heavier burden than others, leading to calls for collective action within the EU to address the crisis and support affected countries. The crisis has been described as one of the most complex and challenging events Europe has faced since WWII and has put identity politics among Europe up to debate (Metcalfe-Hough, 2015, p.2). Recurring sea accidents, escalating incidents along the EU and Schengen borders, overwhelmed national administrative offices, and the call for a "welcome culture" and solidarity, were among some of the things that sparked intense public and political debates across all European countries (Barlai et al., 2017, p.13). Various proposed solutions emerged before the migrant crisis, and during, yet many remained unfulfilled amidst differing perspectives and complex challenges.

3.1 Dublin Regulation

One of the long proposed but ultimately unfulfilled solutions to the crisis was the Dublin Regulation. According to this, asylum-seekers are allowed to submit just one application for international protection, and this must be done in the initial EU state that they enter (Hampshire, 2015, p.8). The goal of the regulation is to deter multiple applications, known as "asylum-shopping", because if an asylum-seeker is discovered to have entered through a different country from where they apply for asylum, they can be sent back to that country (Hampshire, 2015, p.9). The Dublin Regulation has been through multiple versions proposed, but in the end unfulfilled. Countries such as Italy have long complained that the regulation places unfair burdens on them (Hampshire, 2015, p.9). Halfway through 2015, the German government announced unilaterally that it would cease returning Syrian refugees to the first country that they entered, tearing up the regulation (Hampshire, 2015, p.9). Unfortunately, this was not a solution. This abrupt shift gave rise to an east-west division, where five central and eastern European countries – Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary, vocally opposed mandatory relocation (Hampshire, 2015, p.10). This shows us the ongoing dynamics at the time within the EU and gives us the context to understand the response of Germany and the Merkel Government.

3.2 Germany and the "Welcome Culture"

Chancellor Angela Merkel's leadership played a central role in shaping the response of Germany to the migrant crisis. As mentioned in the introduction, Germany initiated a policy of welcoming refugees known as "Willkommenspolitik" or "Welcome Politics". This approach aimed to provide humanitarian support and assistance to the migrants. After Merkel so famously declared "Wir schaffen das" ("We can do it") in September of 2015, Germany temporarily opened up its borders to refugees, bypassing the Dublin Regulation III (Funk, 2016, p.290). This showed that Germany conveyed confidence in addressing the challenges posed by the migration crisis and symbolized their commitment to managing the influx of migrants. But, Germany could not have done all of this alone. Government efforts to accommodate the influx were significantly bolstered by the civil society and their active involvement (Funk, 2016, p.292). Numerous individuals volunteered their time and resources in acts of solidarity to fill significant gaps in state assistance for the migrants, promoting the "welcome culture" in the absence of sufficient administrative resources and infrastructure from the government (Funk, 2016, p.292). This extensive involvement of civil society volunteers in assisting refugees during the migrant crisis, reflects the civic inclusive identity that Germany tends to have. The efforts of the volunteers were varied and extensive, spanning diverse geographic locations across Germany - large towns and small cities, both in the west and east (Funk, 2016, p.292). The volunteers also came from various backgrounds – students and professors, Muslim and Christian, people of all ages and employment statuses, and though not exclusively, with a predominant representation of women (Funk, 2016, p.292). Germany embraced diversity and highlighted the country's commitment to the promotion of inclusivity and of a more diverse and tolerant society.

3.3 The response of Italy to the crisis

Italy had an internal struggle where there was tension between the advocates of stringent immigration policies and those who insisted in the humanitarian responsibilities that Italy had (Fiore & Lalongo, 2018, p.484). Positioned strategically in the Mediterranean, the country gets the brunt of the migration crisis, and is on the so-called frontlines. In 2015 alone, Italy welcomed 154,000 migrants and was heavily engaged in maritime rescue and search efforts (Castelli Gattinara, 2017, p.319). However, the country's response was characterized by struggles to cope with the sheer number of arrivals and the strained resources. Although they had maritime search and rescue operations, they still faced challenges and criticism in managing the situation effectively. Already in 2007, Italians overwhelmingly thought that immigration was a big problem in their country, where 9 in 10 Italians considered it a big problem, and 64% thought it was a "very big problem" (Horowitz, 2010). The migrant arrivals in 2015, sparked broader discussion on cultural, socioeconomic and security implications of immigration, as well as conflicts over ethno-cultural diversity within multicultural societies (Castelli Gattinara, 2017, p.319). These debates influenced discussions on EU policies, national identities, Italian nationality laws, and governmental responses to citizen concerns, which then prompted reflections on societal organizations, specifically regarding exclusion and inclusion criteria (Castelli Gattinara, 2017, p.320). The debates also put pressures on heightened conflict over religious and cultural diversity, stricter border controls and incurred additional expenses within an already tightly regulated fiscal framework (Castelli Gattinara, 207, p.319). The influx of migrants that came from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds, may have been perceived as a challenge to Italy's sense of national identity, explaining the societal organizations discussing inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The country was calling on the EU to help them with the influx, highlighting burden-sharing among EU member states, and a comprehensive and coordinated approach (Castelli Gattinara, 2017, p.325). Overall, we can see that Italy had a different response to the crisis than Germany.

While both countries grappled with the challenges posed by the migrant crisis, their responses differed in notable ways. Germany's response to the crisis with their motto of "wir schaffen das" and their "willkommenspolitik" displayed a more compassionate and comprehensive approach. Based on the civil society and their volunteering, the citizens showed openness, acceptance, and tolerance, underscoring their dedication to humanitarianism. This is something that is linked with civic identity, as it tends to be more inclusive. In contrast, Italy's response reflected a stronger emphasis on ethnic identity. To manage the migration flows, the country implemented stricter border controls and policies, reflecting their concerns, and having a more guarded and cautious approach. As mentioned, some of the debates were about cultural and religious diversity, showing us that cultural heritage and a sense of cultural homogeneity was important to the Italians. This more guarded approach, along with the reflecting of concerns about social cohesion and cultural preservation, links them to their ethnic identity that tends to be more exclusive. However, because of the migrant crisis sparking a lot of debates and the population thereby participating in policy responses, public attitudes, and social cohesion, we can clearly see that they have a civic identity, but it comes second after the ethnic identity.

4 Method and Methodology

The thesis is based on a comparative case study analysis of two countries. Each case is examined in detail, and the emphasis is on understanding how different variables or factors manifest across the cases. The reason for why I have chosen these two countries is because they at first sight might seem the stark opposite of each other in terms of their portrayal in media with the crisis. Italy found itself at the frontline of the influx of migrants, while Germany was not geographically positioned on the frontline of the crisis but voluntarily took in a substantial number of refugees. By doing a comparative study I wanted to see the differences and maybe even some similarities between these two countries more closely. Notable differences, but also similarities, emerge in the manifestation of ethnic and civic identities, shaping varying responses and attitudes towards migration.

4.1 Data – ESS6 and ESS9

The European Social Survey (ESS) was inspired by the European Science Foundation, which was a project conceived with the objective of aggregating and analyzing extent data concerning the evolution of socio-political orientations among European citizens across diverse nations (Jowell et al., 2007, p.2). ESS is an important survey, because comparative research in general not only elucidates intriguing differences between countries and cultures but also unveils aspects of one's own country and culture that might remain obscure when relying solely on domestic data (Jowell et al., 2007, p.2). ESS is today a scholarly cross-national survey conducted across Europe since its inception in 2001, and every two years, newly selected cross-sectional samples participate in face-to-face interviews (ESS, n.d). For the purposes of this thesis, the analysis centers on data from round 6 and round 9 of the survey, referred to as ESS6 and ESS9. The ESS assesses the attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral patterns of diverse populations in over thirty nations (ESS, n.d). The overall theme of ESS6 is "Personal wellbeing, Democracy", and in ESS9 "Timing of life, Justice and fairness".

When analyzing the data, I will primarily focus on descriptive statistics pertaining to various variables related to immigration, trust, democracy, and social cohesion. These variables will be grouped into thematic categories based on their relevance to the ESS questions and the overarching themes emerging from the data. Hence, the grouping into "perceptions of democratic governance", "social cohesion and trust", and "attitudes towards diversity and immigration". These are the overarching themes that have been found in the data.

When examining the data, I will be considering two distinct time periods, where one is before the migrant crisis, and the other is after. The round before the crisis was collected in 2012, and the round after the crisis was collected in 2018. What we need to note here is that neither of the data was collected during the peak of the crisis in 2015. ESS9 collected in 2018, might not fully capture the sentiments prevalent during the crisis, as it was collected after the peak of the crisis. This then prompts consideration whether anti-

immigrant sentiment might have been stronger in 2015 compared to what the data from ESS9 might reflect. Therefore, it is crucial that we interpret the findings with this context in mind, acknowledging that attitudes may have varied in response to the changing conditions and events surrounding the migrant crisis.

The number of respondents vary from the two rounds, and for the two countries. ESS6 had 2958 participants in Germany, and 960 participants in Italy (ESS, 2012, pp.84-119). In ESS9 there were 2358 participants in Germany, and 2745 participants in Italy (ESS, 2018, pp.110-141). Additionally, it is important to note that some questions were not available in both rounds, which will be noticed in the tables under the "Empirical analysis" section.

Last section of the methodology chapter will be using Eurobarometer, in order to look at the countries regarding relationship to the EU, and trust in the EU. To correspond with the time stamp of the ESS rounds, Standard Eurobarometer 77 and 89 will be used, corresponding to the years of 2012 and 2018. The surveys rely on a randomly selected sample of at least 1000 persons.

5 Empirical results

5.1 Perceptions of Democratic Governance

Table 1 Perceptions of Democratic Governance before and after crisis

ESS Question	Germany R.6	Germany R. 9	Italy R. 6	Italy R. 9
How important is it to live in a country that is governed democratically? (scale: 0 -10)	8.93 (1.80)	n/a	8.83 (1.92)	n/a
How democratic do you think that your country is overall? (scale: 0 - 10)	7.00 (2.10)	n/a	5.13 (2.51)	n/a
And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country? (scale 0 - 10)	5.99 (2.15)	5.89 (2.36)	4.11 (2.32)	5.12 (2.14)

Note: Cell entries are country means with standard errors in parentheses.

Analysis of survey responses from ESS reveals nuanced perceptions of democracy in both Italy and Germany, with small differences observed in the degree of satisfaction with democratic governance. Three questions will be presented here, and thereafter the results will be analyzed. The first chosen question from ESS6 and only found in ESS6 is "How important is it to live in a country that is governed democratically?. This question directly explores the importance individuals place on democratic governance, which is a fundamental component of civic identity, as mentioned previously. The second chosen question will be "How democratic do you think that your country is overall?". This question, exclusive to ESS6, holds significance as it delves into individuals' perceptions of the extent of democracy within their nation, offering valuable insights into their comprehension of democratic principles and institutions. Connecting to this question a bit, the final question within this grouping will be "And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country?". This question assesses the contentment of individuals with how democracy operates, which is also a crucial element of civic identity and will help us measure it. While it might not be immediately apparent how perceptions of democratic governance are relevant in measuring civic identity, it is. Civic identity encompasses active engagement in democratic institutions and processes, along with a sense of belonging to a community. Individuals' perceptions of how democracy functions in their country can therefore reflect their commitment to civic participation and values.

In the first question, most Germans answered that this was "Extremely Important", which was the maximum answer out of 10. Most Germans in general leaned more towards extremely important on the scale, than not at all important, with the mean being 8.92. This is no wonder as 60.58% of the Germans that participated in ESS6 answered "Extremely Important/10" on the scale. Comparing the results of the survey to Italy,

57.85% of the Italians participating in ESS6 answered "Extremely Important". Based on these answers, we can see that there is a similarity in both countries thinking that to live in a country that is democratically governed is important for at least half of the participants. While we must be careful with this question, for individuals with a strong civic identity, living in a democratically governed country may reflect their belief in democratic principles and values. Conversely, individuals with a more ethnic identity, may prioritize other factors such as cultural homogeneity over democratic governance. Therefore, this question can provide insights into individuals' priorities.

The results from the second question were that 25.31% of the Germans participating answered an 8, with the mean being 6.99. More people leaned towards "completely democratic/10", than they did towards "not at all democratic/0". In comparison, most Italians answered a 5 here, with 20.11% of the participants answering this and a mean of 5.13. This is less than Germany, but here it might be important to consider additional contextual factors that may have influenced attitudes towards the migrant crisis. For instance, by 2014 populist parties were already on the rise in Italy, whereas populist parties did not rise to prominence in Germany until after the crisis. These factors highlight the complexity of understanding the responses and attitudes to the migrant crisis, emphasizing the significance of contextual analysis when interpreting data.

Lastly, our third chosen question identified that in ESS6, most Germans answered a 7, where a 10 would be "extremely satisfied". The mean was 5.98. In ESS6 most Italians answered a 5, which is a bit lower than Germany, where more people actually leaned towards "extremely dissatisfied/0". The mean for Italy in ESS6 was 4.10. Fast forward to ESS9, the results for the Germans did not change much, with most people still answering an 8 or 7, and the mean being 5.88. For Italy, most people answered a 6 this time, but they still leaned a little bit more towards "extremely dissatisfied" than "extremely satisfied". The mean was 5.12, which is a slight change upwards on the scale from ESS6 in 2012. This shows that Italians are exhibiting increased satisfaction with democracy in ESS9, which is very interesting as it is increasing after the peak of the migrant crisis in 2015. As mentioned, in the introduction, Italy underwent economic challenges in the form of a crisis before the migrant crisis in 2015. This could imply that Italians perceive the migrant crisis as external to their government, because it was not "home-made" like the economic crisis, leading to the results of them being more satisfied with democracy in ESS9 than in ESS6.

5.2 Social cohesion and Trust:

Table 2 Social cohesion and Trust before and after crisis

ESS Question	Germany R.6	Germany R. 9	Italy R. 6	Italy R. 9
Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves? (scale: 0 -10)	5.15 (2.04)	5.44 (2.02)	4.13 (2.42)	4.33 (2.25)

Note: Cell entries are country means with standards errors in parentheses.

In the category of social cohesion and trust this thesis has chosen out the question of "would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?". This question evaluates how individuals perceive social

cohesion and trust within their society, which again is also a key component of civic identity, as the social part is just as important as the political aspect of civic identity. In Germany, most people answered a 5 with 25.75% of the Germans participating in ESS6 answering this. This is in the middle between "People mostly try to be helpful/10" and "people mostly look out for themselves/0". More Italians were leaning towards the latter than the former, with the mean being 4.12 for Italy, and 5.14 for Germany. In regard to ESS9, not much changed for either of the countries, which is interesting. Most Italians answered a 5 on the scale, with the mean being 4.32. In comparison to Germany, not much changed for them either, as the mean was 5.44 and most answered a 5 here also, but in general the population leaned more towards "people mostly try to be helpful" than "people mostly look out for themselves". There is a small difference between Italy and Germany here, when it comes to both rounds staying consistent with Italians saying that a slightly larger portion of the population lean towards "people mostly try to be helpful", while in Germany we find the opposite results, but again not by much. The observation of ESS9 suggests that the necessity for collective action in Italy during the migrant crisis could have influenced perceptions of societal assistance and cohesion, given that Italy was in a frontline position in the crisis. Individuals witnessed firsthand the efforts people made to aid migrants, consequently leading to a perception of increased helpfulness and societal solidarity. There are suggestive signs that elements of civic identity may be emerging in Italy. However, given the complexity of identity dynamics and the need for further research, we approach this interpretation with caution, acknowledging the need for additional research to validate these preliminary observations.

5.3 Attitudes towards Diversity and Immigration

Table 3 Attitudes towards Diversity and Immigration before and after crisis

ESS Question	Germany R.6	Germany R. 9	Italy R. 6	Italy R. 9
To what extent do you think your country should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most in your [country] to come and live here? (Scale: 1-4)	1.76 (0.70)	1.66(0.67)	2.12 (0.88)	2.31(0.91)
How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most of your [country] people? (Scale: 1-4)	2.14 (0.78)	2.08 (0.77)	2.27 (0.93)	2.52 (0.91)
Would you say that your country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? (scale 0 - 10)	6.20 (2.34)	6.02 (2.52)	5.61 (2.79)	4.73 (2.75)
Is your country made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?	5.34 (2.18)	5.34 (2.23)	4.40 (2.49)	4.11 (2.47)

Note: Cell entries are country means with standard errors in parentheses.

Assessing attitudes towards diversity and immigration is not only important as it is the dependent variable of this thesis, but also because we will try to link it to civic identity. We will be looking at four questions within this category. The first question will be "To what extent do you think your country should allow people of the same race or ethnic

group as most in your [country] to come and live here?" and linked closely "How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most of your [country] people?". These questions tackle attitudes regarding diversity and immigration, providing insight into civic identity and attitudes towards social inclusion. This will give insight into even more dimensions of civic identity in both Italy and Germany. Our third and fourth questions, also slightly linked to each other, will be "Would you say that your country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?" and "Is your country made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?". These questions delve deeper into perceptions of cultural diversity and its societal impact, potentially shaping individuals' sense of belonging and civic identity.

As for "To what extent do you think your country should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most in your [country] to come and live here?", most Germans in ESS6 answered "allow some" with 49.30% of the participants in this survey, while at the same time 30.20% chose "allow many to come". Italians had the same answer with "allow some" consisting of 45.95% and "allow many" to come and live here with 25.16% of the participants voting this option. They do have more that answered "allow a few" than Germany did in ESS6. In ESS9 Germans answered very alike from ESS6, with 46.46% Germans choosing "allow some" and also 44.10% voting "allow many" to come and live here. In comparison, the Italians are more spread in ESS9 with 39.82% answering "allow some", but actually now more saying "allow a few" with 29.17% of the participants. The mean for Germany in ESS6 was 1.7 meaning allow many to come and live here, and Italy's mean being 2.1 – which means most allow some to come and live here. In ESS9 the mean has not changed much for Germany being 1.6, however there is a slight difference for the Italians with the mean being 2.3 which is starting to lean more towards "allow a few" than in ESS6. Closely linked to the first question presented, we have our second question of "How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most of your [country] people?". In ESS6 half of the Germans participating answered "allow some", with additional 24.82% leaning towards "allow a few", with the mean being 2.14 which would be "allow some". The Italians have a similar mean in ESS6 of 2.27, but a little more of the population participating leaning towards "allow a few". In ESS9 half of the Germans answered again "allow some", but more are leaning towards "allow a few" with the mean being 2.08. The case is the same for the Italians answering "allow some", but closely followed by "allow a few" with 35.58% and 34.86%. The mean is 2.52 which is "allow some" but leaning a little bit more towards a 3 this time, which means "allow a few".

Moving on to the question of "Would you say that your country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?", the mean for Germany in ESS6 was 6.20, with more people leaning towards "cultural life enriched/10" than "cultural life undermined/0". In ESS9 Germany has a slight decrease with the mean being 6.02, and people answering more in the middle of the scale than towards any of the ends. Continuing the talk on decreasing, in ESS6 Italy has the mean of 5.61, with people leaning more towards "cultural life enriched/10" than the opposite end of the scale, but in ESS9 the mean for Italy has decreased to a 4.73, with more people answering "cultural life undermined/0" than "cultural life enriched/10". Closely linked to "Is your country made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries", Germany had the mean of 5.34 in ESS6, and Italy had the mean of 4.40 in the same round. In ESS9 the mean stays the same for Germany, and only increases by 4.11 for Italy. What is noteworthy here is that while people answer

mostly on the middle of the scale in Germany, they lean more towards "worse place to live/0" in Italy. Both of these questions aim to gauge respondents' perceptions of the effects of immigration on their respective countries. What we gather from these questions is that German citizens stayed in the middle of the scale after the peak of the migrant crisis, but Italy did not, and leaned slightly more towards the 0 on the scales. This can be linked back to civic identity being more tolerant and acceptant, and therefore individuals in Germany might view immigration as more enriching to their country's cultural life and its overall well-being. Conversely, the Italy here shows their more ethnic identity when we look at the results on culture. Italians in general perceived immigration as potentially undermining to their country's cultural life.

5.4 Trust and Relationship to the EU

Table 4 Trust and Relationship to the EU before and after crisis

Eurobarometer Question	Germany 2012	Germany 2018	Italy 2012	Italy 2018
How much trust do you have in certain institutions: The European Union (Answer alternatives: Tend to trust, tend to not trust, don't know)	30% tend to trust, 61% tend to not trust (9%)	49% tend to trust, 42% tend to not trust(9%)	22% tend to trust, 62% tend to not trust (16%)	36% tend to trust, 51% tend to not trust (13%)
Please tell me to what extent you feel you are a citizen of the EU (Answer alternatives: Total "Yes", Total "No", Don't know)	74% Total "yes", 25% Total "No" (1%)	84% total "Yes", 15% total "No"(1%)	45% total "yes", 54% total "no" (1%)	56% total "yes", 43% total "no"(1%)

Note: Cell entries are percentage of respondents selecting each option in relation to the corresponding survey question with "Don't know" in parentheses.

In 2012 regarding the question "How much trust do you have in certain institutions: The European Union", 30% of Germans answered "tend to trust" and, 61% answered "tend to not trust". In Italy, 22% answered "tend to trust", and 62% answered "tend to not trust". What is noteworthy is that the percentage difference is not that great between the countries. Moving on to 2018, 49% of Germans answered "tend to trust", and 42% answered with "tend to not trust". In Italy, 36% answered with "tend to trust" and 51% answered with "tend to not trust". It seems that both countries had an increase in the percentage of people answering "tend to trust", and a decrease in people answering with "tend to not trust".

Similarly, in 2012 concerning the question of "Please tell me to what extent you fell you are a citizen of the EU", 74% of Germans answered with "Yes" and 25% answered with "No". During the same year, 45% of Italians answered with "Yes", and 54% answered with "No". In 2018, 84% of Germans answered "Yes" and 15% answered "No". In Italy, 56% answered "Yes" and 43% answered "No". We again have an increase in the percentage of people answering that they feel like they are a citizen of the EU, and a decrease in people answering that they do not feel that they are a citizen of the EU.

Briefly summarizing all of our empirical results, we find both similarities and differences between the two countries. When examining perceptions of democratic governance, the results showed similarities in relatively high levels of implementation of democratic

values, which could indicate a strong commitment to democratic principles. Next, we find that when considering the impact of immigration on societal and cultural factors, Italians consistently report lower scores compared to Germany, in both rounds. Lastly, both countries demonstrated relatively high percentages of people reporting that they do feel like citizens of the EU, with both countries increasing their percentage over the years. When it comes to trust to the EU, we see the same pattern.

6 Conclusion:

It is time to draw some cautious conclusions about the possible link between identity constructions, and attitudes and responses to the migrant crisis. Overall, the findings and theory in this thesis have provided us with some answers for *How can the national identities in the case of Italy and Germany differ, and how can these identity constructions affect the attitudes and responses to the migrant crisis?*. The literature review laid out a foundation where we identified Italy having an ethnic identity first, and Germany having a civic identity. These national identity constructions were then linked to certain traits, values, and inclusive vs exclusive. Further, we found that in light of the crisis, attitudes towards immigrants and the EU can change, and this is conditioned by the type of national identity. Despite facing similar challenges during the migrant crisis, such as social tensions and economic strains, the two countries exhibited distinct responses shaped by their respective identity constructions.

Firstly, Germany and its more inclusive civic identity, exemplified by Merkel's "wir schaffen das" and "willkommenspolitik", facilitated a more humanitarian response to the crisis. The civil society was a significant factor to the openness that migrants received. In Germany, where civic identity is the dominant national identity, the analysis reveals a nuanced continuity in attitudes towards immigrants before and after the crisis. While there was a slight increase in negative sentiments post-crisis towards immigrants, the fundamental openness inherent in civic identity fostered a relatively favorable stance towards immigrants, enduring even amid challenging circumstances. Consequently, we anticipated that Germany would have a relatively more positive attitude towards out-groups, and because of their civic identity also a greater level of confidence in national institutions to effectively manage crisis in general, which happened. However, it is important to remember that this thesis chose a limited number of variables to look at, and one must always have additional contextual content in mind.

Conversely, Italy with its predominantly ethnic identity which tends to be exclusive, exhibited more negative sentiments towards immigrants. It was expected that Italy would be the opposite of Germany in terms of reactions because ethnic identity is exclusive, and we therefore expect to see more negative attitudes towards immigrants. However, there are noteworthy results in Italy, despite it being a frontline country during the crisis, and their initial struggles. As evidenced by heightened contentment with democratic governance and perceptions of societal cohesion, we carefully observe trends of possible civic attitudes emerge. We acknowledged that results from ESS9 showed Italians being more satisfied with democracy than in ESS6, despite the migrant crisis, showing us again that it is important to look at other contexts before coming to any conclusions. This thesis did not focus on the economic differences between Italy and Germany but mentioned that Italy might have viewed the migrant crisis as external to other challenges happening in the country, and therefore growing more satisfied with their own government despite the crisis. As Italy was a frontline country, and Italians saw each other help, it also suggests an evolving acknowledgment of shared responsibility and collective solidarity, albeit amidst ongoing debates surrounding identity dynamics.

Moreover, the analysis of attitudes towards the EU and EU citizenship reveals more nuanced perspectives that intersect with national identity narratives. While both countries exhibit varying levels of identification with EU and levels of trust, these attitudes are most likely influenced by broader perceptions of democratic governance and societal factors. After all, correlation is not causation. However, what we must note is that even after the crisis, both countries showed an increase in trust to the EU and feeling like they are a citizen of the EU. From what we know of collective identities and how European identities are more oriented towards civic identity, we can expect that Germany will have more support for the EU after the crisis than Italy. Yet, Italy still had an increase when it comes to them feeling like a citizen of the EU. The increase was even 1% more than Germany, and while this is a small increase, it is also why we proceed cautiously with the findings of civic elements in Italy after the crisis. We also saw a 3% decrease in people being uncertain and answering "don't know" regarding the question of whether they trust the EU or not, showing the evolving relationship between citizens and institutions.

In summary, this comparative study underscores the imperative of contextual scrutiny in comprehending the complexities in national identities during crises. The primary objective of this thesis is not exhaustive explanation but rather an exploration of the roles played by national identities in shaping attitudes and responses to the migrant crisis. This study has shed light on the complex interplay between civic and ethnic identities and how in light of the migrant crisis attitudes and responses towards immigrants can change. The study found some unexpected answers, for example national identity in Italy is more nuanced than is often assumed. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the presence of unexamined variables, notably economic disparities which could play a pivotal role in shaping responses to the migrant crisis as well. Further research is needed to delve deeper into the nuanced dynamics of national identities, trust, and governance in the context of evolving crises. Additionally, *jus sanguinis* would be interesting to further add to the research.

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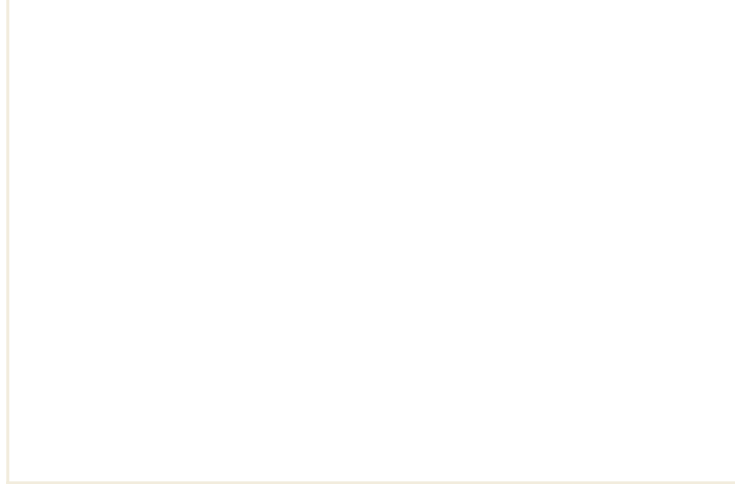
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